

T-523

Smith Island crabbing skiff
St. Michaels, Maryland

This vessel is an 18'10" long deadrise crabbing skiff of a type indigenous to the Smith Island area of Chesapeake Bay. Built c. 1900 in the Smith Island area, she was used for crabbing (dip-netting and tending floats) by being poled or pushed. She may also have had a sailing rig or an engine at one time. The vessel is on display at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. This vessel is significant as an example of an important indigenous Bay craft--the V-bottomed, deadrise skiff that developed in the 19th century for crabbing, fishing, and oystering. It is of especial interest as being a good example of the particular regional variation of crabbing skiff built in the Deal, Smith, and Tangier Island areas.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T-523

Magi No. 2105235633

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Smith Island crabbing skiff CBMM 72-31-1

2. Location

street & number Mill Street ☐ not for publicationcity, town St. Michaels ☐ vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland county Talbot

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

street & number telephone no.: 745-2916

city, town St. Michaels state and zip code Maryland 21663

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. liber

street & number folio

city, town state

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

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Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☐ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This boat is a deadrise skiff measuring 18'10" long and 4'7" in beam. Built c. 1900 in the Smith Island area, she was used for crabbing(dip-netting and tending floats) by being poled or pushed. She may also have had a sailing rig or an engine at one time. The boat is on display at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, St. Michaels as an example of a type commonly used around Deal, Smith, and Tangier Islands.

The skiff has a hard chine and transom stern. She is fore-and-aft planked on the bottom, rather than cross-planked as are many deadrise skiffs. She is partially decked, with washboards, and is painted white with red-brown trim on the sheer.

The skiff has a straight, slightly raking stem with the stemhead raised above the foredeck. The transom stern is slightly raked. Construction is fore-and-aft planking, with the bottom boards nailed into the sides at the chine, giving a shallow, almost flat, V-bottom and straight sides. There are twelve full frames run from chine to chine across the bottom planking. The washboards and half-decking at bow and stern are supported by 12 wide, sawn triangular knees. There is a 2 3/4"-high coaming surrounding the break in the deck. A section of the afterdeck near the transom, measuring 21 1/2" by 16", lifts out over an 8 1/2"-deep storage well. The narrow sheer rubbing strake added to the outside of the washboards is painted a dark red-brown, the sole decoration.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c. 1900 Builder/Architect Unknown

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as an example of an important indigenous Bay craft--the V-bottomed deadrise skiff that developed in the 19th century for crabbing, fishing, and oystering. Built around 1900 this boat is a good example of the type used and built around Deal, Smith, and Tangier Islands. It was poled or pushed rather than being rowed.

The Chesapeake Bay crabbing skiff is an indigenous type which is to be seen in many different local forms and variations (at least 15) reflecting design innovations by particular builders or definite regional characteristics. The V-bottom, deadrise skiff, first seen in the local skiff/bateau vessel type, was later adapted by local boatbuilders for the larger skipjacks, or two-sail bateaux. Thus, these surviving examples of Chesapeake-area skiffs are important in understanding the construction techniques and design innovations still to be seen today in the surviving skipjack fleet. They also were the means of carrying out an important local industry--crabbing, fishing, and oystering.

The Smith Island skiff at the Museum was built at Smith Island c. 1900 and follows the local type in construction details and overall shape. The skiff has a high straight bow, very shallow draft, and is fore-and-aft planked--characteristics shared by the later motorized Smith Island crab skiff also in the Museum's collection. The boat was used for crabbing by being poled or pushed rather than rowed and was characteristically used to tend floats and for dip-netting. The boat was donated to the Museum in 1972 by Mr. and Mrs. Jackson Ray Todd of Cambridge, Md.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. T-523

Howard I. Chapelle, American Small Sailing Craft (New York: W.W. Norton, Co., 1951)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting NorthingB

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Zone Easting NorthingC

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M.E. Hayward

organization Maryland Historical Society

date 5/84

street & number 201 W. Monument St.

telephone 685-3750

city or town Baltimore

state Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438



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Smith Island crabbing skiff
St. Michaels, Md

Starboard side - stern
A.E. Witty 5/84



T-523

Smith Island crabbing skiff
St. Michaels, Md.

port side

M.C. Wootton 5/84